DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 260 750 JC 850 462

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TITLE College in Paradise! (Paradise Valley Shopping Mall).
PUB DATE 18 Jul 84
NOTE 10p.; Paper presented to the Paradise Valley Mall Advisory Committee (Phoenix, AZ, August, 1984).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Community Colleges; Cooperative Programs; *Extension Education; *Noncampus Colleges; *Outreach Programs; Program Descriptions; Public Relations; Two Year Colleges
IDENTIFIERS *Rio Salado Community College AZ; Shopping Centers

ABSTRACT

Rio Salado Community College (RSCC), a non-campus college within the Maricopa Community College District, offers hundreds of day, late afternoon, and evening classes at locations throughout the county. The Paradise Valley community had always participated heavily in the evening classes offered by RSCC at local high schools. In fall 1982, an effort was initiated by RSCC personnel to find a location within the community for day classes and more student services. The answer to this search came through a proposal from Westcor (a shopping mall developer) that the mezzanine of the new Paradise Valley Mall be used by the community college. Community response was enthusiastic. A formal advisory committee for the center was formed to serve as a sounding board as courses, programs, schedules, services, and proposals for publicizing the center were explored. A Subcommittee on Publicity Endeavors (SCOPE) was created to help direct the public relations effort from a business viewpoint. The total effort of the community advisory committee and RSCC personnel helped start the fall 1983 semester with 1,424 students, increasing to 1,758 by spring. During the first two semesters of operations, 150 classes, focusing primarily on the general studies requirements for the districts associate degree programs, were offered at times ranging from early morning to late evenings and weekends. During the second year, much more effort is going into the development of student services. The Paradise Valley Mall Center has been so successful that another center is planned for the Westridge Mall in the southwest part of the Metropolitan Phoenix Area. (AYC)

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COLLEGE IN PARADISE!
(PARADISE VALLEY SHOPPING MALL)

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Presented to the Paradise Valley Mall Advisory Committee
August 1984

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COLLEGE IN PARADISE!

Housewares, elegant clothes, sports clothes, furniture, jewelry, shoes, or a college education? They are all available at the beautiful shopping mall in Paradise Valley, a residential area of Phoenix, Arizona. Rio Salado Community College has developed another unique solution to making a college education easily accessible to the public--in fact, right in the market place--the Paradise Valley Mall.

Rio Salado Community College is one of seven colleges in the highly respected Maricopa Community College District of Arizona. Rio is unique among the seven in that it serves the entire 9,226 square miles of Maricopa County without a campus. Its program includes hundreds of late afternoon and evening classes in high schools, churches, training and conference rooms throughout the county. Day classes are given in governmental agencies, business and industry sites, and in two Rio centers. The one, long established, is in the Bell Plaza Office Building, of the famous retirement center, Sun City. The six classrooms are filled with classes that cater to the senior adults in the day and to others from the surrounding towns in the evening. The success of the second center in a major shopping mall has marked the beginning of several such planned ventures in the Phoenix metropolitan area including a third to open this fall.

Community Need

The Paradise Valley community had always been a source of large numbers of students in evenings classes at the three high schools in the district. Actual student services to these persons were limited and nothing was available in the community for the large population who could take classes only in the daytime. Recent high school graduates usually attended one of the three district community colleges which were 15 to 20 miles away. But the adult population with free daytime hours were not being served in their own community.

The community leaders in Paradise Valley have long spoken of their need for a community college, but until recently have not had the ear of the Maricopa Governing Board. Regardless of the need, the finances and the time to develop a campus will postpone that dream for some time.

Lucile Schoolland, Associate Dean of Rio's North County Area, became an active member of Paradise Valley community groups and as such recognized the community needs. In the fall of 1982, Schoolland determined to identify a location for the North Area office to provide day classrooms and more student services. Store front space and space in an under-utilized elementary school were evaluated. The answer came instead from Westcor, the developers of several beautiful malls. The company proposed the use of the mezzanine at the new Paradise Valley Mall for the community college.

Community response was enthusiastic about such a center. The community council, a quasi-public body, unanimously recommended accepting the mall site over any others under consideration. In May a formal advisory committee for the

center was formed with persons from the community, high school district, community education, service organizations, businesses, hospitals, seniors, and the two State Representatives and the State Senator from that district. The committee was consulted on educational programs and student services which should be provided.

College President Myrna Harrison negotiated a five-year lease of the mezzanine (6,418 square feet) and recommended that the District Governing Board approve and fund the new center thus increasing the Rio budgeted funds for 1983-84. An increase in 2,000 headcount and approximately 180 fulltime student equivalent was anticipated. After the Governing Board approved the lease on June 9, 1983, the advisory committee selected a long but descriptive name, Paradise Valley Mall Center, as an ideal location identification.

The advisory committee was a critical sounding board as courses, programs, schedules, services, and proposals for publicizing the new center were explored. An active subcommittee was formed to help direct this PR effort. Nicknamed SCOPE for Subcommittee On Publicity Endeavors, it proceeded to broaden the scope of any publicity endeavor that the area office had ever envisioned.

As business oriented persons, the SCOPE members recognized that time and dollars were woefully short of what was needed to "market a new product"--a center for a noncampus college--on a mezzanine of which few persons were aware! The one thing going for it was that everyone knew where the Paradise Valley Mall was. The magnificent mall covers 300 acres of a Master Planned Community of 1,250 acres. Three major department stores and 130 other retail, theater and food tenants occupy the central core. In the periphery are 80 other retail stores, restaurants and a wholesale design center. Therefore, SCOPE helped us take a totally new look at an education venture from a business viewpoint.

Since funds for paid advertising were limited, the committee recommended:

1) Go with the district theme, "Get on with your life," to tag onto the district TV ad spots. This meant foregoing the neat but undeveloped theme of "College in Paradise."
2) Rely heavily on correspondence to all local entities: churches, service organizations, parent groups, hospitals, and large businesses.
3) Advertise in the three local weekly newspapers, not in either of the two big metropolitan dailys.
4) Develop a regular schedule of news releases, each with a special theme.
5) Have an opening event prior to classes, with demonstrations and lectures to get people physically up to the mezzanine.
6) Publicize the opening with 30,000 flyers distributed to civic organizations and by mall merchants as bag stuffers.
7) Mail the Paradise Valley Mall Center's schedule as a tabloid to 55,000 persons in the immediate vicinity.

For the first time, the college published an area schedule in a tabloid paid for by advertising! The major mall division of Cox Publications designed the tabloid just as they would for a mall promotion. Ads were taken by companies which either wanted to support the college or would immensely profit from the additional traffic in the mall. The tabloid also covered the evening classes in the nearby high schools and publicized the services available to students at the new center.

The Program

The program was developed to utilize space as fully as possible. Office space was kept to a minimum so that more space could be available for services and classes. Seven classrooms were designed to accommodate 24-32 students each. One was planned with acrylic tile floor and water available at a sink for limited art or photography courses. All other classrooms were carpeted and have white porcelain boards and cork tackboards. Individual student tables and chairs which could be set up in many different configurations were planned for some rooms. The other classrooms have adult tab chairs which have a large desk surface. A computer laboratory also was set up with a multi-purpose room designed to serve the nontraditional course delivery methods through audio teleconferencing and video cassette courses and for testing for audio cassette and correspondence courses.

Our program was designed so that persons could complete the general studies requirements in the Paradise Valley area for the three degrees granted by the Maricopa District: Associate in Arts, Associate in General Studies, or Associate in Applied Sciences. In addition, courses could be taken to complete specific certificates and AAS degrees such as Supervision and Banking. The mall program relies heavily on lecture courses.

Computer courses are an exception. The center started with a computer lab with 15 Apple IIe's and 15 Prowriters. The set-up allows 30 students in each class to have hands-on experience from Business/Personal applications Computers to Cobol. A second lab for fall 1984 will be equipped with IBM personal Computers: Multiplex software will simulate Wang Word Processing.

Implementation

The total effort of the community advisory committee and the Rio North Area personnel helped start the fall semester with 1,424 students, increasing to 1,758 by spring semester. The fulltime student equivalent was a little lower than hoped for at the center (185), but the net increase of 200 was unexpectedly reached in the area since the evening enrollment in the closest high school increased considerably. By spring we were loaning Northern Arizona University one classroom each night for upper division classes and developing a strong articulation between the community colleges and the university for transfers of AA and AGS degrees to their Bachelor of General Studies program.

We have provided 150 classes in the two semesters, hiring over 50 new part-time instructors and orienting them to Rio and the district, as well as supervising and evaluating all faculty.

We originally scheduled courses early morning (before work), morning, early afternoon (before elementary school students arrived home), late afternoon, evening, and weekends. Results are a great deal like the existing campuses--much activity in the morning and evening, with little in the afternoons. The exception is the computer room which is busy from 7:30 a.m. tc 10:00 p.m.!
We are still experimenting to see how we can serve unique populations with classes in the early afternoon (perhaps non-credit for seniors), or a weekend college (intensive Friday and Saturday classes for alternate weekends in Small Business Management and General Education courses).

Our demographics bear out what we anticipated: 74% of our students are women, 32% of our students are between the ages of 23 and 35, while 50% are over 35 years of age.

The mall location has proved to be ideal for a center and worth the massive effort expended. As we plan now for our second year, much more of our effort can go to developing student services. So far, we have only provided increased program advisement and a minimum number of workshops on study skills, time management, and test anxiety. The mall location has been attractive to students as they have the most wonderful selection of gourmet foods for lunch or breaks and they can always shop on their way to or from class. The major benefit is that we have brought the community college education conveniently to the center of the community.

FUTURE PLANS

The Paradise Valley Mall Center has been so successful that the idea has been adapted to serve the southwest portion of the Metropolitan Area with a third center at Westridge Mall to open fall 1984. The program will be developed in a similar format with the addition of classroom space for two state universities, NAU and ASU, as well as the Maricopa Skill Center (Job Entry Training). Further, we hope to create throughout the county shopping mall centers that will provide a complete range of educational opportunities for our adult students.

COLLEGE IN PARADISE! WHAT A WAY TO GO!

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE:

Lucile B. Schoolland, Associate Dean of Education, has been with Rio Salado Community College four years. She has the responsibility for the northern portion of Maricopa County, covering suburban developments in Deer Valley and Paradise Valley.

Prior to joining RSCC, she was Director of Continuing Education at Maricopa Technical Community College. Originally from Colorado, she has a Masters Degree and additional graduate work from Arizona State University.

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